

## NOTES ON THE EXPEDITION TO KOMATIPOORT, 16th–28th June, 1916.

By Dr. H. G. BREYER.

A SMALL expedition was undertaken to the neighbourhood of Komatipoort to procure skeletons and skins of *Hippotragus equinus*, *Bubalis lunatus*, and *Strepsiceros strepsiceros*, and to get an idea of animal life there in the beginning of winter.

Members of the expedition were: the Director, F. O. Noome, taxidermist, G. van Dam, and J. W. F. Breyer.

Camp was made near the kraal of Machabezane, about two miles from the police post at Squamman, near the Komati, and 14 miles S.S.W. of Komatipoort. The river here is about 100 yards broad, and the banks on our side are fairly steep and rocky. We chose this stony spot in order to be more or less safe against nocturnal visits of hippopotami. There were about fourteen of these in the vicinity; being never troubled or interfered with, they have become rather inquisitive, and just a few days before our arrival they had paid a visit at night to some hunters two miles up the river and had quite upset their tent. There were many crocodiles in the river and several were shot, but their bodies were not recovered. We crossed the river at Inguenhene Kraal (Steinecke's Drift) on the farm Coopersdale. The drift is good, sandy, but deep. Whilst travelling, we saw three *Bubalis lunatus*, of which one male was secured. Between Inguenhene and Machabezane is a long stretch of nearly impenetrable bush, not more than 300 yards broad, which is reported to swarm with game, mostly bushbuck and koodoo. Wherever the banks of the river were stony and rocky there was an abundance of lizards, mostly *Gerrhosaurus validus* and *Mabuia quinquetaeniata*. Several of them were secured by shooting them with a small .410-bore collecting gun. I may mention that, in the immediate vicinity of Komatipoort, just behind the soda-water factory, these two species can be easily secured in quantities, whilst there is at the same place also a magnificent cluster of *Sarcostemma viminalis*, which when in flower attracts many insects.

The only snake we met was a *Sepedon haemachaetes*. Near our camp we found on the wing: *Charaxes aethalion*, *Ch. brutus*, *Catopsilia florella*, *Teracolus achine*, *T. evenina*, *T. antigone*, *Hypanis ilithyia*, *Pyrameis cardui*, *Danais chrysippus*, *Terias zoë*, *T. brigitta*, *Pieris severina*, *P. mesentina*, *Hamanumida daedalus*, *Junonia clelia*, several *Lycaenids*, and a few *Hesperids*, but none of these were plentiful except the kinds of *Teracolus* and *Pieris*.

On walking along the banks of the river I discovered a few plants in flower: some *Vernonias* and a kind of *Conyza*. This last one attracted two kinds of *Acræids*, *Atella phalanta*, *D. Chrysippus*, and fairly many *Hymenoptera*, besides the Noctuid, *Egybolis vaillantina*, Stoll, the *Vernonias* being visited mainly by *Teracoli* and *Pierids*. Under the bushes a *Justicia* was often found in flower and here also settled some *Pieridae*. Near an ancient cattle kraal some specimens of *Lippia asperifolia* were open, and these attracted *Lycaenids* and *Catopsilia*.

In every crevice between the stones, where good soil had been washed in, aloes were growing; a few of them were already in flower, others still developing their large succulent flower-stalks. They were visited every morning by green

pigeons, *Vinago delalandii*, and small parrots, *Poocephalus meyeri*, which gave life to the scenery. The young leaves and the flower-stalks were eaten as well as the buds.

A beautiful *Hibiscus*, growing 7 to 8 feet high, which I found often the year before at Gadhla's Kraal, Maputaland, and which yielded such good results (*Teracolus regina*, *T. difficilis*, *Eronia cleodora*, and lots of *Trypetidae*), was constantly under observation. Its flowers began to open at 9.30 a.m. and closed about half an hour before sunset; but, at whatever time I visited this conspicuous plant, not a single insect was found, not even a *Mylabrid*.

Every night traps were set for small rodents and insectivora. Before going to bed, and just before sunrise, the traps were inspected. Notwithstanding these precautions several specimens were lost, through ants having eaten the lips, nose, and the pads of the toes. Unfortunately three fine shrews were mutilated to such an extent that the skins were absolutely spoiled.

Molerats were very scarce, but we succeeded in capturing one, which is described by Mr. A. Roberts as *Georychus stellatus*.

Birds, on the other hand, were plentiful, especially *Buphaga erythrorhyncha*; every ox we saw carried several of them. Besides these I noticed the common guinea fowl, *Numida coronata*, *Francolinus shelleyi*, *Elanus caeruleus*, *Plotus rufus*, several common weaver birds, *Nectarina famosa*, two kinds of woodpeckers, a barbet, the two kinds of *Crateropus*, *Urolestes*, etc. No ducks were seen on the water.

A good deal of trouble was taken to secure trapdoor spiders. In the beginning we found hardly any until it was found out that one species made its nest quite near the stems of aloes and other trees, whilst the *Pelmatorgetes* built practically against the stones. One nest was rather remarkable. It was found under a tree, which had shed a very large number of nearly circular leaves of the size of a sixpence. Whilst blowing away these leaves, we remarked that one of them was kept in its place by almost invisible threads, and on closer examination it proved to be attached to the lid of a trapdoor spider nest, entirely covering the entrance. The nest is carefully preserved in our collection and the spider belongs to the genus *Acanthodon*.

Amongst the plants there were few interesting forms, except the *Huernia zebрина*, the first record from Transvaal. This species being only known from Zululand, without further reference to locality, specimens were brought to Pretoria and planted in the Zoological Gardens; but they all died during the winter.

The following list of the captured Rhopalocera, with a few remarks, was made by Mr. C. J. Swierstra, our first assistant and entomologist:—

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## LEPIDOPTERA FROM KOMATIPOORT.

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### LEPIDOPTERA—RHOPALOCERA.

#### Family NYMPHALIDAE.

#### Sub-Family ACRAEINAE.

1. *Acraea neobule* Doubl. 3 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀. Typical specimens. 1 ♂ and 1 ♀ are in perfect condition, the others more or less worn.
2. *Acraea caldarena* Hewitson. 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀. The ♀ is very small but otherwise quite typical, as are also the ♂♂.
3. *Acraea oncaea* Hoppf. 9 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀. The ♂♂ are of the typical form, while the 2 ♀♀ are of the darker variety with the white spots well developed in forewing.

4. *Acraea terpsichore* L. var. *rougeti* Butler. 15 ♂♂, 9 ♀♀. Some of the specimens are perfect, whereas the others are all more or less worn. They show the usual variation in size, and the ♀♀ in coloration also.

## Sub-Family NYMPHALINÆ.

5. *Atella phalanta* Drury. 1 ♂, 1 ♀.  
 6. *Precis clelia* Cramer. 1 ♂.  
 7. *Precis cebrene* Trimen.  
 8. *Hamamumida daedalus* F. 1 ♂.

## Family LYCAENIDÆ.

9. *Deudorix licinia* Mabille. 1 ♀. A very much worn specimen.  
 10. *Deudorix antalus* Hopf. 1 ♂. A very much worn specimen.  
 11. *Hypolycaena philippus* Fabr. 1 ♀. This seems to be a fairly rare species. Although recorded from several localities it has nowhere been observed in numbers.  
 12. *Hypolycaena cocculus* Hoppf. 1 ♂. A worn specimen. Komatipoort seems to be the most southern limit of this species so far. It occurs right up to German East Africa and to Mukenge in the Congo.  
 13. *Aphnaeus natalensis* Westw. 1 ♂. A worn specimen.  
 14. *Asciocercis harpax* Fabr. 1 ♂. Worn.  
 15. *Cupido melaena* Trimen. 2 ♂♂.  
 16. *Cupido Jesus* Guérin. 1 ♀.  
 17. *Cupido malathana* Bsd. 3 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀. All specimens very much worn.  
 18. *Cupido osiris* Hopff. 1 ♂.  
 19. *Cupido osiris* (Hopff) var. 1 ♂.

## Family PIERIDÆ.

20. *Mylothris agathina* Cramer. 1 ♂, 1 ♀.  
 21. *Pieris severina* Cramer. 3 ♂♂, 1 ♀.  
 22. *Pieris mesentina* Cr. 5 ♂♂, 1 ♀.  
 23. *Teracolus annae uallengreni* Butler. 4 ♂♂. Typical dry-forms, but not the extreme.  
 24. *Teracolus achine ithonus* Butler. 15 ♂♂, 4 ♀♀. In all gradations of size and freshness. The greater part of the specimens come very near to *T. achine simplex*, only 2 ♂♂ being typical *T. achine ithonus* Butler.  
 25. *Teracolus evenina* Wllgr. 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀. These are quite fresh specimens and intermediate between *T. evenina* and *Aurivillius* var. *hib. deiclamioides*.  
 26. *Teracolus antigone* Bsd. 8 ♂♂, 9 ♀♀. These 17 specimens are all really intermediate between *T. antigone* and *T. antigone phlegetonia* Bsd.  
 27. *Eronia leda* Bsd. 1 ♂. A fairly good specimen.  
 28. *Terias storicola ceres* Butl. 1 ♂.  
 29. *Terias brigitta* Cam. 9 ♂♂, 1 ♀.  
 30. *Terias brigitta zoë* Hoppf. 6 ♂♂.  
 31. *Catopsilia florella* Fabr. 2 ♂♂.

## Family HESPERIDÆ.

32. *Pterygospedia flesus* Fabr. 1 ♂. Worn.  
 33. *Pyrgus vindex* Cram. 1 ♂.  
 34. *Pyrgus hottentota* Latr. 1 ♂.  
 35. *Pamphila fatuella* Hoppf. 1 ♂.  
 36. *Pamphila mohopaani* Wllgr. 1 ♂.  
 37. *Hesperia forestan* Cram. 1 ♂.

## LEPIDOPTERA—HETEROCERA.

## Family ARCTIADAE.

38. *Utetheisa pulchella* Linn. 1 ♂, 1 ♀.  
 39. *Rhodogastris astreas* Drury. 1 ♂. The first specimen recorded from the Transvaal.

## Family NOCTUIDAE.

40. *Parathermes melanocephala*. 1 ♂.  
 41. *Thermesia atriplaga* Wlk. 1 ♂.  
 42. *Acontia groellsi* Feisth. 1 ♂.  
 43. *Egybolis vaillantina* Stoll. 1 ♂, 1 ♀.

## Family GEOMETRIDAE.

44. *Rhodometra sacraria* Linn.

The other insects collected on this expedition are not yet identified, neither are the trapdoor spiders. The smaller mammals are enumerated in the article of Mr. Roberts' additions to the collections of the Transvaal Museum.

As regards the larger kinds of game, I am greatly pleased to be able to state that between Lebombo and Komati there is an abundance of roan antelope, *Hippotragus equinus*, blue wildebeest, *Connochaetes taurinus* and *Aepyceros melampus*, whilst koodoo, waterbuck, bushbuck, rietbuck, and duiker are not at all scarce. Sassaby were very scarce; the only time we saw them was on our first day, as mentioned.